

Swaziland Week of Action

09 September 2009

The Joint Swazi Campaign Committee, a group formed this month by Swazi and South African civic organisations, held a series of activities during the first week in September as part of the Global Week of Action on Swaziland to promote democracy in the kingdom.

On Friday 4 September, members of The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and other South African organisations joined Swazi civil society and trade unions for a border blockade at Ngwenya Border Post, between Swaziland and South Africa, where they distributed messages of solidarity. The activists demanded the unconditional release from prison of Mario Masuku, leader of the banned political party PUDEMO, and the repeal of the repressive prevention of terrorism act. During the border action some civil society representatives delivered speeches in support of the campaign, including Raymond Mnguni, the COSATU chairperson in Mpumalanga, the PUDEMO Deputy President Skhumbuzo Phakathi and SWAYOCO President Wandile Dludlu.

According to reports from PUDEMO and SWAYOCO Wandile Dludlu was arrested and tortured by the Royal Swaziland Police during the border blockade. The Swazi police allegedly handcuffed him as soon as he crossed the border from South Africa and drove him to a forested area where he was brutally interrogated. According to DLUDU four police officers tortured him for three hours and forced him to admit having smuggled guns and explosives into Swaziland. He has since been released on bail.

Following the success of the Global Week of Action and building on the international solidarity shown by COSATU affiliates and other organisations, the Joint Swazi Campaign Committee is now organising the second phase of its programme. On September 25 the group will deliver a petition to the Swazi embassy in Pretoria, to coincide with PUDEMO President Mario Masuku's trial in Swaziland, calling for his release and stressing that his release is tied to the liberation of the whole country.